



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: state budget includes funding to combat threat to Finger Lakes environment and economy

THOMAS F. O'MARA March 28, 2012

| ISSUE: **ENVIRONMENT**



[April 2, 2012 Update: [Listen here](#) to Tompkins County Administrator Joe Mareane on WHCU radio]

Albany, N.Y., March 28—Ithaca-area state Senators Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats), Mike Nozzolio (R-C, Seneca Falls) and James Seward (R/C/I-Oneonta) announced today that the 2012-2013 state budget includes \$800,000 in funding to assist local efforts to stop the spread of the invasive aquatic plant hydrilla, which was found last year in the Cayuga Inlet.

The trio of state lawmakers has been working closely with **local leaders and other state officials** to urge both houses of the Legislature and Governor Andrew Cuomo to provide increased state support to begin a more aggressive, effective eradication program this spring.

“The uncontrolled spread of hydrilla would devastate regional tourism and cost local communities hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of jobs. We’ve appreciated the hard work of local leaders and concerned citizens throughout Tompkins County and the surrounding regions we represent, as well as the opportunity to work together with them on this effort,” said O’Mara.

“Stopping this destructive plant before it takes hold is essential to protecting Cayuga Lake and other upstate bodies of water, securing their beauty and economic potential for generations to come,” said Seward.

“This is an excellent beginning to what we hope will be a sustained, long-term eradication program and strategy. We have to recognize and do everything possible to combat this severe threat to the environment and economy of the Finger Lakes, Great Lakes and Erie Canal regions,” Nozzolio said.

All three senators applauded the governor and the rest of their legislative colleagues for responding to their call for this vital environmental funding.

Hydrilla, which was detected in the Cayuga Lake inlet in 2011, is very tough to control once established and would require vast outlays of funds to continually dredge and chop the growth.

The eradication effort will be directed by the Tompkins County Hydrilla Task Force, comprised of members from the City of Ithaca, the Town of Ithaca, Tompkins County, Cornell University, local Invasive Species experts and consultants, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Tompkins County Soil & Water, Tompkins County Health Department, NYS Parks, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, the Floating Classroom, and other concerned citizens and volunteers.

The Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District has estimated that it will cost between \$700,000 and \$1 million annually for an effective, 5-8 year eradication program.